IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR IN FMCG SECTOR IN DELHI - NCR

Synopsis of the Research Proposal Submitted for the Registration

Ph.D. Programme

in

Management

By

Ashish Gupta

(Enrollment No. 25JPPHNDMS007)

Under Supervision of

Dr. Vidhu K. Mathur

Associate Professor

(ICFAI Business School)

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List of Abbreviations

FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
UGT	Uses and Gratifications Theory
SMM	Social Media Marketing
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
MV	Mediating Variable
ModV	Moderating Variable
NCR	National Capital Region
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CR	Composite Reliability
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
EY	Ernst & Young
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
CASR	Committee for Advance Studies and Research

Abstract

Digitalization has become an irreversible trend that has literally revolutionized the marketing strategies of businesses, especially for “FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods)” marketers in a market like Delhi and NCR, which has a high population density. The present study explores the effect of Digital Marketing (the three components – Influencer Marketing, “Social Media Marketing (SMM), and Electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM)” on Consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi and NCR. Based on “Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)”, which suggests that consumers actively select media to meet information, entertainment and social interaction needs, this study develops a framework that examines the relationship between digital marketing stimuli and purchase intention as well as consumer behavior.

The study recognizes three independent variables: Influencer Marketing, Social Media Marketing and eWOM with two mediating variables: Brand Trust and Purchase Intention and one dependent variable: Consumer Buying Behavior. Demographics and Digital Literacy are moderating variables. The research design used for carrying out the research is a quantitative, descriptive-causal research and structured questionnaire is used for administration. For analyzing the data, “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)” with SmartPLS 4.0 will be used.

The study revealed many significant research deficiencies: The lack of empirical research on FMCG digital marketing especially in Delhi-NCR, the restricted examination of the effect of micro and macro influencers in India, and the uninvestigated function of brand trust as a mediating variable. In addition to theoretically expanding UGT and offering FMCG marketers practical insights in the Delhi-NCR area, the research also provided market insights on the use of digital marketing as a promotional instrument for FMCG marketers.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Social Media Marketing, eWOM, Consumer Buying Behavior, FMCG, Delhi-NCR, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention.*

1. Introduction

The FMCG industry in India is among the biggest and most rapidly expanding industries, forecast to reach USD 230.14 billion in 2023, with an anticipated CAGR of 27.9%, culminating in USD 1,288.50 billion by 2030. Due to its substantial consumer density, extensive digital penetration, and varied socioeconomic demographics, Delhi and the NCR represent one of the most significant markets for FMCG in India. With the massive adoption of the smartphone, inexpensive internet and the growth of social media platforms has led to an unprecedented transformation in how FMCG brands engage with and impact consumers.

In fact, digital marketing – which includes influencer marketing, SMM and eWOM – has become the primary platform for FMCG brand communication. According to KANTAR (2025) in 2024 the Indian marketer industry reached INR 3,600 crore and is projected to increase by 25% in INR 4,500 crore by 2025. What is more important and significant, 76% of the Indian FMCG brands say that trust and credibility are the leading reason to use influencers for their campaigns and more than 63% of Indian users trust in influencers for product discovery.

Despite this increase, academic research is limited in clarifying the specific mechanisms via which digital marketing influences consumer purchase behaviour in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR. This study used the "Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)," first proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973, as its theoretical framework. UGT asserts that consumers are active, goal-oriented media users who want to satisfy psychological and social needs, such as information gathering, entertainment, companionship, and social identity. Croes and Bartels (2021), whose landmark study using 415 respondents identified six primary UGT motivations for following social influencers, provides the primary theoretical foundation for this proposal.

The present research extends this framework to the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR, integrating influencer marketing, SMM, eWOM, brand trust, and consumer demographics to develop a holistic model of digital marketing effectiveness. PLS-SEM will be employed to validate the proposed model and contribute empirical evidence to a largely underexplored domain.

2. Review of Literature

The following table provides a thorough analysis of the essential literature, aligning each study with its main results and significance to the current research. The review is structured around five thematic domains: (i) Uses and Gratifications Theory in digital marketing, (ii) Influencer Marketing and consumer behaviour, (iii) Social Media Marketing and FMCG, (iv) "Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)" and purchase decisions, and (v) Consumer Purchase Behaviour in the Indian FMCG context.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
1	**"Croes & Bartels (2021)"**	"Young Adults' Motivations for Following Social Influencers and Their Relationship to Identification and Buying Behavior *[Computers in Human Behavior, 124, 106910]"*	**1.** Identified 6 UGT incentives for adhering to influencers: information dissemination, contemporary trend, leisurely entertainment, camaraderie, alleviation of boredom/routine pastime, and knowledge acquisition. **2.** Social recognition with influencers influences the connection between Uses and Gratifications Theory motives and both ad-clicking and purchasing behaviour. **3.** Study of 415 respondents aged 16–25 via online questionnaire. **4.** Motivational importance differed significantly by age, gender, and educational background.	Primary theoretical framework (UGT) for this study. The 6 UGT motivations are directly adapted to the FMCG influencer marketing context in Delhi-NCR. Social identification is incorporated as a mediating pathway in the proposed model.
2	**"Zeqiri, Koku, Dobre et al. (2025)"**	"The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness, Brand Engagement and Purchase Intention in Emerging Economies *[Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 43(1), 28–49]"*	**1.** Based on UGT and "Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE)" model; PLS-SEM used with 1,808 respondents across 5 countries. **2. "**Social media marketing (SMM)", including social media interaction, trendiness, informativeness, and entertainment, significantly impacts brand exposure and engagement. **3.** Brand awareness and customer brand engagement strongly moderate the link between social media marketing and purchase intention.	Explicitly endorses the incorporation of SMM as an autonomous variable. This research examines how brand awareness and engagement mediate the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention. Multi-country emerging economy context validates application to India.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
			4. Effects vary across countries — confirms role of cultural/contextual factors.	
3	**"Lou & Yuan (2019)"**	"Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media *[Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58–73]"*	**1.** Influencer informational value and entertainment value significantly increase consumer trust in branded content. **2. "**Parasocial relationships (PSR)" between influencers and followers are key mediators. **3.** Source credibility (trustworthiness, expertise) positively impacts purchase intentions. **4.** Confidence in influencer material is a more significant predictor of buy intention than confidence in the brand itself.	Provides the conceptual basis for Brand Trust as a mediating variable in this study. The source credibility dimensions (trustworthiness, expertise) are adopted as measurement indicators for Influencer Marketing (IV1).
4	**"Kujur & Singh (2020)"**	"Visual Communication and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Social Networking Sites – Uses and Gratifications Theory Perspective *[Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 15(1), 30–47]"*	**1.** Visual communication on SNS significantly strengthens consumer-brand relationships. **2.** UGT dimensions — entertainment, information, and social interaction — drive visual content engagement. **3.** Higher engagement through visual SMM leads to stronger brand loyalty and repeat purchase intent. **4.** Gratifications sought differ by content type and platform.	Advocates for the integration of "Social Media Marketing (IV2)" and substantiates UGT as a legitimate theoretical framework for evaluating the efficacy of SMM on consumer purchasing behaviour in the FMCG industry.
5	**"Yang & Ha (2021)"**	"Why People Use TikTok (Douyin) and How Their Purchase Intentions Are Affected by Social Media Influencers: A UGT and Parasocial Relationship Perspective *[Journal of Interactive Advertising, 21(3), 297–305]"*	**1.** UGT motivations (entertainment, information, social interaction) drive TikTok usage. **2.** Parasocial relationships (PSR) between users and influencers significantly predict purchase intention. **3.** Entertainment and information gratifications are the strongest predictors of PSR. **4.** PSR completely mediates the relationship between UGT motives and purchasing intention.	Affirms the relevance of UGT and parasocial connection theory to short-video influencer marketing, particularly pertinent to Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts prevalent in Delhi-NCR FMCG marketing. PSR is incorporated as a conceptual precursor to Brand Trust.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
6	**"De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders (2017)"**	"Marketing Through Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence on Brand Attitude *[International Journal of Advertising, 36(5), 798–828]"*	**1.** High-follower influencers are perceived as more popular but less likeable and less persuasive. **2.** Micro-influencers generate higher brand attitude and perceived authenticity for niche FMCG products. **3.** The disparity between an influencer's specialisation and the endorsed product adversely impacts brand perception. **4.** Influencer follower count is not a reliable proxy for marketing effectiveness.	Explicitly delineates the study gap concerning the impacts of micro vs macro influencers inside the FMCG industry in Delhi-NCR. Establishes the need to analyse influencer type as a moderating variable in the proposed model.
7	**"Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)"**	"Exploring the Credibility of Online Celebrities' Instagram Profiles in Influencing the Purchase Decisions of Young Female Users *[Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 1–7]"*	**1.** Instagram celebrities significantly influence purchase decisions of young female consumers aged 18–35. **2.** The perceived credibility of an influencer, including trustworthiness and knowledge, is the primary determinant of influence. **3.** Influencer marketing surpasses conventional celebrity endorsements in effectiveness for daily-use categories of goods. **4.** Peer-generated online content (eWOM) reinforces influencer-driven purchase decisions.	Supports the Consumer Buying Behavior (DV) construct and validates influencer marketing as an effective purchase driver for FMCG-type products. The eWOM-purchase behavior link is directly incorporated into the hypotheses.
8	**"Fan, Chan, Wang, Li & Prieler (2023)"**	"How Influencers' Social Media Posts Influence Audience Engagement Among Young Consumers *[Young Consumers, 24(3), 291–305]"*	**1.** Influencer post characteristics (interactivity, vividness, informativeness) positively affect audience engagement. **2.** Engagement levels are highest when UGT needs (information + entertainment) are satisfied simultaneously. **3.** Young consumers aged 18–30 are most responsive to influencer-driven engagement. **4.** Engagement modulates the impact of influencer postings on brand interest and purchase intention.	Supports the measurement items for Influencer Marketing (IV1) — particularly the entertainment and information seeking dimensions. The engagement-to-purchase trajectory underscores the mediation function of Purchase Intention within the framework of this research.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
9	**"Akram, Lavuri, Ansari et al. (2023)"**	"Havocs of Social Media Fake News! Analysing the Effect of Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Self-Efficacy on Consumer's Buying Intentions *[Journal of Strategic Marketing]"*	**1.** Credibility and trustworthiness of eWOM content are the strongest predictors of buying intention. **2.** Self-efficacy in evaluating online content moderates the eWOM–buying intention relationship. **3.** Exposure to misinformation on social media significantly diminishes brand trust and buying intent. **4.** The authenticity of the source directly influences the link between electronic word-of-mouth and customer behaviour.	Provides the theoretical foundation for eWOM (IV3) and its role in shaping Brand Trust (MV1) and Consumer Buying Behavior (DV). The credibility and trustworthiness indicators are directly used as eWOM measurement items in this study.
10	**"Koay, Cheung, Soh & Teoh (2022)"**	"Social Media Influencer Marketing: The Moderating Role of Materialism *[European Business Review, 34(2), 224–243]"*	**1.** Influencer marketing effectiveness is significantly moderated by consumer materialism. **2.** Social contact and entertainment gratifications are primary motivators of influencer engagement behaviour. **3.** High-materialism consumers are more susceptible to influencer-driven purchase impulses. **4.** Reward/incentive gratifications (e.g., discounts via influencer codes) are strong purchase motivators.	Supports the inclusion of social interaction and entertainment as measurement items for both Influencer Marketing (IV1) and SMM (IV2). The moderating influence of consumer traits elucidates the Demographics & Digital Literacy moderating factor (ModV).
11	**"Li, Larimo & Leonidou (2021)"**	"Social Media Marketing Strategy: Definition, Conceptualization, Taxonomy, Validation, and Future Agenda *[Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 49(1), 51–70]"*	**1.** Developed a comprehensive taxonomy of SMM strategy across 5 dimensions: content, network, advertising, channel, and analytics. **2.** SMM activities drive consumer engagement, attitude formation, and purchase behavior. **3.** Informativeness, entertainment, and trendiness are the three core content-level gratifications satisfied by SMM. **4.** Proposed future research agenda calls for examining SMM in FMCG contexts in emerging markets.	Provides the conceptual basis for Social Media Marketing (IV2) construct and its sub-dimensions (informativeness, entertainment, trendiness, social interaction). The future research agenda identifies the FMCG-India gap that this study directly addresses.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
12	**"Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg (2011)"**	"Who Are the Social Media Influencers? A Study of Public Perceptions of Personality *[Public Relations Review, 37(1), 90–92]"*	**1.** The web influencers are seen as competent, informed, and autonomous opinion leaders. **2.** Influencers are differentiated from conventional celebrities by their perceived genuineness and relatability. **3.** Public perceptions of influencer personality traits directly affect attitude toward endorsed products. **4.** Influencers function as a new class of third-party endorsers with higher perceived objectivity.	Establishes the foundational definition and conceptualization of social influencers used in this study. The perceived credibility and authenticity dimensions are core measurement indicators for Influencer Marketing (IV1) and Brand Trust (MV1).
13	**"Che, Peng, Zhou, Dickey & Lai (2023)"**	"The Impacts of Gamification Designs on Consumer Purchase: A Use and Gratification Theory Perspective *[Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 59, 101268]"*	**1.** UGT gratifications (achievement, social, immersion) from gamified digital experiences significantly predict consumer purchase. **2.** Reward gratification is the strongest predictor of purchase behavior in digital commerce contexts. **3.** Gamification-based SMM increases brand engagement and purchase frequency for FMCG-type products. **4.** UGT is validated as an effective framework for explaining digital commerce purchase decisions.	Extends UGT validation to digital commerce purchase behavior, reinforcing the theoretical framework. The reward and social interaction dimensions are incorporated into the eWOM (IV3) and SMM (IV2) measurement items.
14	**"EY India (2023)"**	"State of Influencer Marketing in India *[Industry Report, Ernst & Young LLP, Mumbai]"*	**1.** FMCG is among top 3 sectors boosting influencer marketing spend in India. **2.** YouTube and Instagram are the predominant venues for influencer content favoured by Indian consumers. **3.** Seventy-six percent of FMCG businesses see credibility and trust as primary motivations for engaging in influencer partnerships. **4.** Short video formats (Reels, Shorts) are fastest-growing content type for FMCG influencer campaigns.	Provides industry-level empirical context for the study, justifying FMCG as the research sector and Delhi-NCR as the target geography. The 76% trust finding directly supports Brand Trust as a mediating variable.

S.No.	Author & Year	Title of Paper / Journal	Key Findings	Relevance / Mapping to Present Study
15	**"Kantar India / WPP Media (2025)"**	"India Influencer Marketing Report 2025 *[Industry Report, WPP Media South Asia, New Delhi]"*	**1.** The Indian influencer marketing sector is estimated to be valued at INR 3,600 crore in 2024, with an anticipated growth rate of 25% in 2025. **2.** More than 63% of Indian consumers rely on influencers for product discovery, while 69% seek product information from them. **3.** Seventy percent of companies see trust and reputation as primary motivations for engaging influencers. **4.** Long-term influencer partnerships (72% preference) and content quality over follower count are emerging priorities.	Provides the most current (2025) empirical evidence for influencer marketing effectiveness in India. The product discovery (63%) and information (69%) statistics directly validate UGT information-seeking motivation as a key driver in the Indian context.

Note: All publications are referenced in the Bibliography (Section 14). The UGT article by Croes & Bartels (2021) serves as the major theoretical foundation for this study. Columns 4 and 5 directly connect each study's results to the research variables, aims, and hypotheses of the current proposal.

3. Research Gap

Notwithstanding the expanding corpus of knowledge on internet marketing and consumer behaviour, significant gaps persist:

- Most current research on influencer marketing and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is situated within Western or East Asian settings (Croes & Bartels, 2021; Yang & Ha, 2021). There is a notable deficiency of empirical research substantiating these frameworks especially for the Indian FMCG industry inside the Delhi-NCR urban consumer demographic.
- No published study simultaneously integrates influencer marketing, SMM, and eWOM as co-determinants of FMCG consumer buying behavior in a unified PLS-SEM model for Delhi-NCR.
- The mediating function of brand trust between digital marketing and real purchasing behaviour, rather than simple purchase intention, is insufficiently investigated within the Indian FMCG setting.
- The moderating influence of demographic characteristics (age, age, socioeconomic status digital literacy) on the link between digital marketing and purchasing behaviour among FMCG consumers in Delhi-NCR remains mainly unexplored.

- The differentiated effects of micro versus macro influencers on FMCG consumer behavior in Indian metropolitan markets have not been systematically studied, despite industry evidence (EY, 2023; Kantar, 2025) of differential effectiveness.

4. Statement of Problem

While FMCG brands are investing heavily in influencer marketing, social media campaigns, and eWOM strategies, there is a significant gap between industry investment and academic understanding of how these digital marketing mechanisms specifically influence consumer buying behavior in Delhi-NCR. This study investigates: To what degree does digital marketing, including influencer marketing, social media marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth, affect consumer purchasing behaviour in the FMCG sector in Delhi and NCR, and what function does brand trust serve as a mediator in this dynamic?

5. Significance of the Study

- Applies "Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)" to the Indian FMCG sector and adds empirical data to the UGT with the Indian context.
- Provides FMCG marketers in Delhi-NCR with evidence-based insights on which digital marketing channel most effectively drives consumer buying behavior.
- Fills a pertinent gap in the UGT literature as well as FMCG marketing in India by contributing to the concept of understanding brand trust as a mediating variable in the successfulness of digital marketing.
- Informs digital marketing budget allocation strategies for FMCG brands targeting the Delhi-NCR market.
- Delivers a validated measurement model (construct table with 35 items) available for future researchers in Indian urban consumer markets.

6. Research Questions

1. Does influencer marketing significantly impact consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR?
2. Does social media marketing (SMM) influence consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR?
3. Does eWOM significantly influence brand trust and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR?

4. Does brand trust mediate the relationship between digital marketing and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector?
5. Do demographic variables and digital literacy moderate the relationship between digital marketing and consumer buying behavior in Delhi-NCR?

7. Research Objectives

1. O1: To examine the impact of influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
2. O2: To assess the influence of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
3. O3: To analyze the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between digital marketing and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector.
4. O4: To evaluate the impact of eWOM on purchase intention and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
5. O5: To investigate the moderating role of demographic variables and digital literacy on the digital marketing–consumer buying behavior relationship in Delhi-NCR.

8. Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses — Influencer Marketing (O1)

- "H1a: Influencer marketing (information sharing motivation) has a significant positive impact on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
- H1b: Influencer marketing (entertainment motivation) has a significant positive impact on purchase intention in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
- H1c: Social identification with influencers mediates the relationship between UGT motivations and buying behavior in the FMCG sector. (Croes & Bartels, 2021)".

Hypotheses — Social Media Marketing (O2)

- "H2a: SMM informativeness has a significant positive effect on consumer brand awareness in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
- H2b: SMM entertainment and trendiness positively influence consumer brand engagement in the FMCG sector.
- H2c: Consumer brand engagement mediates the relationship between SMM and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector".

Hypotheses — Brand Trust as Mediator (O3)

- "H3a: Brand trust mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector.
- H3b: Brand trust mediates the relationship between eWOM and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector".

Hypotheses — eWOM (O4)

- "H4a: eWOM credibility has a significant positive impact on brand trust in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR.
- H4b: eWOM volume and valence positively influence purchase intention in the FMCG sector in Delhi-NCR".

Hypotheses — Moderating Variables (O5)

- "H5a: Digital literacy moderates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector.
- H5b: Demographic variables (age, gender, income) moderate the relationship between SMM and consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector".

9. Research Methodology

9.1 Research Design

The research employs a quantitative and descriptive-causal design. The primary data collection is of primary and secondary both are collected through a cross sectional survey approach with structured questionnaires throughout Delhi and the NCR (Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ghaziabad). The hypothesis validation and model testing will be performed using PLS-SEM model through the software of SmartPLS 4.0.

9.2 Sample and Sampling Design

Target population: FMCG consumers in Delhi-NCR from the age of 18 years to 45 years who are active social media users and have bought FMCG products as recommended through digital marketing in the past 3 months. The number of respondents in the samples was estimated by Cochran's formula and was set to 400. Stratified sampling by gender, age and geo-sub-region.

- Inclusion: Age 18-45; A social media user; FMCG Purchased in the last three months due to digital marketing.
- Exclusions due to age are: Under 18 and over 45; FMCG marketing professionals; not using social media.

9.3 Data Collection

- Primary Data: A structured, self-administered questionnaire with 35 questions (7 constructs × 5 items), evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale. Delivered offline (Malls and MCG retail stores in Delhi-NCR) and online through social media (Google Forms). This pilot study will test 30 respondents for reliability based on Cronbach Alpha (rasa > 0.70) and content validity.
- Secondary Data: Industry reports, Government FMCG market data, Peer reviewed articles (computers in human behavior, journal of interactive advertising, journal of retailing and consumer services).

9.4 Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive statistics consist of the following: mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution.
- Reliability: “Cronbach Alpha” and Composite Reliability (CR > 0.70).
- Validity: Descriptive statistics include the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution, respectively.
- Structural Model: PLS-SEM path coefficients, bootstrapping (5,000 samples), mediation analysis.
- Moderation: Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) in SmartPLS for demographic moderating effects.

9.5 Ethical Considerations

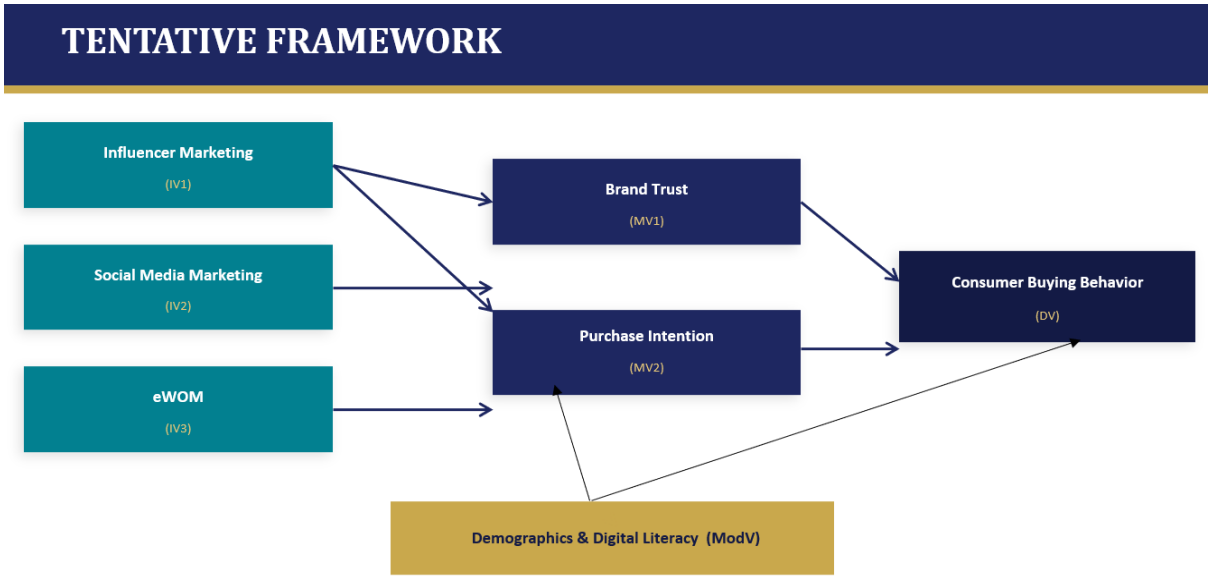
All respondents will be asked to give informed consent. Withdrawals are allowed at any time, participation is voluntary. All data will be anonymised and kept securely. Personally identifiable information will NOT be published. The study will abide ICFAI University Jaipur Research Ethics Guidelines.

10. Detailed Construct Table

The full construct is presented in the table below: operational definition of each variable, measurement items used to measure the variable, reference for the source of the items, and linked objectives". The items on both are evaluated on a 5 point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

Variable	Type	Definition / Sub-dimensions	Measurement Items (5-point Likert)	Source / Reference
Influencer Marketing (IV1)	*Independent Variable*	Utilisation of social networks influencers for the promotion of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG).Sub-dimensions: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness (Source Credibility) and Information Sharing, Entertainment, Companionship (UGT — Croes & Bartels, 2021).	IM1: I trust FMCG product reviews given by influencers I follow. IM2: Influencer content helps me discover new FMCG products. IM3: I find influencer content entertaining and engaging. IM4: Influencer expertise guides my brand choice. IM5: I follow influencers to stay updated on FMCG trends.	"Croes & Bartels (2021); Lou & Yuan (2019); Freberg et al. (2011)"
Social Media Marketing (IV2)	*Independent Variable*	Brand marketing initiatives on the web networks (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook). Sub-dimensions: Informativeness, Entertainment, Trendiness, Social Interaction (Zeqiri et al., 2025).	SM1: Social media ads provide useful info about FMCG products. SM2: FMCG brand content on social media is entertaining. SM3: Brand content reflects latest FMCG trends. SM4: Social media facilitates interaction with FMCG brands. SM5: I explore FMCG products after seeing social media posts.	"Zeqiri et al. (2025); Kujur & Singh (2020); Li et al. (2021)"
eWOM — Electronic Word of Mouth (IV3)	*Independent Variable*	Online consumer-generated reviews, ratings, and recommendations via social media influencing FMCG purchase decisions. Measured by credibility, volume, and valence.	EW1: I read online reviews before buying FMCG products. EW2: Positive reviews on social media motivate my purchase. EW3: I share my FMCG product experiences online. EW4: eWOM from influencer followers builds my brand trust.	"Akram et al. "(2023); Cheung et al. (2022); Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)"

Variable	Type	Definition / Sub-dimensions	Measurement Items (5-point Likert)	Source / Reference
			EW5: Negative reviews discourage my FMCG purchase.	
Brand Trust (MV1)	*Mediating Variable*	Consumer's willingness to rely on a FMCG brand based on influencer endorsements and eWOM. Comprises brand reliability, brand benevolence, and perceived authenticity.	BT1: I trust FMCG brands recommended by influencers I follow. BT2: My trusted FMCG brands rarely disappoint. BT3: Influencer authenticity increases my FMCG brand trust. BT4: I feel safe purchasing FMCG brands promoted on social media. BT5: eWOM reinforces my trust in FMCG brands.	"Lou & Yuan (2019); Kantar India (2025); Freberg et al. (2011)"
Purchase Intention (MV2)	*Mediating Variable*	Consumer's expressed likelihood to purchase an FMCG product influenced by digital marketing stimuli. Grounded in UGT: gratifications drive purchase intent (Croes & Bartels, 2021).	PI1: I intend to buy FMCG products recommended by influencers. PI2: Social media ads motivate me to purchase FMCG brands. PI3: I would recommend an FMCG product after influencer endorsement. PI4: I plan to try a new FMCG product seen on Instagram/YouTube. PI5: eWOM increases my intention to purchase FMCG products.	"Croes & Bartels (2021); Zeqiri et al. (2025); Yang & Ha (2021)"
Consumer Buying Behavior (DV)	*Dependent Variable*	Actual purchase decisions toward FMCG products driven by influencer marketing, SMM, and eWOM. Measured through purchase frequency, brand switching, impulse buying, and brand loyalty.	CB1: I often purchase FMCG products I discover on social media. CB2: Influencer endorsements have changed my FMCG brand preference. CB3: Social media marketing influences my repeat purchase behavior. CB4: I exhibit impulse buying of FMCG products after influencer posts. CB5: My FMCG brand loyalty is influenced by digital marketing content.	"Djafarova & Rushworth (2017); Thangavel et al. (2021); IBEF (2024)"
Demographics & Digital Literacy (ModV)	*Moderating Variable*	Consumer attributes (age, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, digital literacy) modulating the correlation between online marketing stimuli and purchasing behaviour in the Delhi-NCR FMCG sector.	DL1: I am confident using social media platforms for shopping. DL2: My age/generation affects how I respond to influencer content. DL3: My income level affects how much I trust influencer product advice. DL4: Higher digital literacy helps me evaluate influencer authenticity. DL5: My gender moderates my engagement with FMCG influencer content.	"Croes & Bartels (2021); World Bank (2023); Koay et al. (2022)"



11. Scope and Limitations

11.1 Scope

The study has been restricted to geographically Delhi and NCR (Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ghaziabad). Personal care, packaged food, beverages and household products are all classified as FMCG. Digital marketing channels discussed: influencer marketing (Instagram, YouTube), SMM and eWOM. The respondents consisted of adults aged 18-45, having active social media and being consumers of digital marketing in FMCG.

11.2 Limitations

- A cross-sectional design does not allow causal inferences, which can only be sought through longitudinal studies.
- Self-reported survey data may be subject to social desirability and recall bias.
- Geographically limited to Delhi-NCR; findings may not generalise to rural or semi-urban FMCG markets.
- The rapid evolution of social media platforms may limit temporal applicability of findings.
- There is potential for online survey administration to over-represent tech-savvy respondents.

12. Expected Outcomes

- Structural equation model validated by the model to establish a causal relationship between the four author experience variables and their linkages with tenure and FMCG purchase intention and consumer buying behavior in Delhi-NCR.
- Expansion of the UGT application in India for FMCG digital marketing applications based on empirical evidence.

- Identification of the most influential digital marketing channel for driving FMCG consumer buying behavior in Delhi-NCR.
- Evidence of the mediating role of brand trust, providing actionable insights for FMCG brand managers.
- A peer-reviewed publication in a SCOPUS / Web of Science / UGC-CARE indexed journal.

13. Work plan of the study

July 2026 to Dec 2026	Jan 2027 to June 2027	July 2027 to Dec 2027	Jan 2028 to June 2028
1st Progress Report			
Literature Review			
Review papers			
	Preparation of Questionnaire		
	Validation of Data Collection to respective papers		
		Data Interpretation and Analysis	
			Results/ Findings / Conclusions
			Report Compilation and thesis writing

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